Foreword

In 1954 the then Queen of The Netherlands gave, in the city of Leyden, an address to an audience of young citizens urging them to consider the world’s future development as a common responsibility of us all. Queen Juliana was deeply convinced of the need to improve the socio-economic conditions in the countries of what came to be known as the Third World. A freshman of the University of Leyden, by the name of J. George Waardenburg, had just started his study in the department of mathematics and physics. He may or may not have been present in the Queen’s audience, but her message must have reached him anyhow.

Rumour has it that in preparing her address the Queen consulted Prof. Jan Tinbergen, who had started at the Netherlands Economic Institute in Rotterdam in the same year, 1954, a new research unit focusing on the development problem: the Division of Balanced International Growth (BIG). When George graduated in mathematics at Leyden University in 1961, to whom could he better turn for advice on future work on the development issue than Jan Tinbergen – himself, too, a graduate in mathematics and physics of the same university. After his compulsory military service, George Waardenburg was appointed as Research Associate at BIG, and for further study seconded to MIT and Stanford University in the US. Upon return, he worked at BIG, and was appointed in 1967 as Assistant Professor at the Centre for Development Planning of The Netherlands School of Economics (now incorporated in the Erasmus University Rotterdam).

In his teaching and research, Waardenburg focused initially on topics such as mathematics for development planning and regional and interregional planning (Waardenburg, 1975). These subjects also constitute the hard core of a volume that he co-authored with Mennes and Tinbergen: The Element of Space in Development Planning (1969). His activities were not limited to these academic duties, however; right from the start, Waardenburg took an active interest in broader issues of development policy. To mention one example: he was one of the principal authors of a report prepared for the largest protestant church in The Netherlands, in which a strong plea was made for enhanced support and commitment to the national effort in development assistance.

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In the course of the 1970s, George Waardenburg widened the scope of his research and teaching – on the one hand by delving more deeply into the particulars of individual socio-economic sectors (such as small industry, housing and health), and on the other by paying in applied research special attention to the Asian context: India, China and South Korea. Waardenburg’s earlier work on regional planning stimulated his interest in the rural–urban dimension of the economic development process, with a particular concern for employment. He became convinced that the urban industrial sectors of developing countries would never be able to productively absorb the large and growing rural labour surplus, however rapid the urban industrial sector would grow. This explains his interest in the scope for rural non-agricultural employment generation (Waardenburg, 1988a, 1988b). He supervised a number of PhD theses in this area, including Wickramanayake (1988), Tambunan (1994) and Eapen (1999). It also explains his interest in matters of technology choice (Waardenburg, 1988b, 1993; and PhD theses by Piek, 1998; and Lal, 2000) and in international research cooperation as a means to further economic development (Lavakare and Waardenburg, 1989; Waardenburg, 1989, 1988c).

The late 1970s and the 1980s brought new tasks and responsibilities. George Waardenburg was appointed to a full professorship in development planning at Erasmus University and played a major role in the newly established research body focusing on economic and social development in India, to which he gave its name: the Indo-Dutch Programme on Alternatives in Development (IDPAD). Regular contacts with his eminent Indian colleague and close personal friend, the late Professor Sukhamoy Chakravarty, no doubt provided a further stimulus in this direction. Waardenburg became actively involved in Dutch development policy. For five years, until 1984, he chaired the (national) Advisory Council on Development Research. Two years later, he was to become chairman again, now of the Commission for Consultation of Sector Councils. A number of articles and papers from his hand appeared in this period, some on topics mentioned earlier and some on his new field of activity: R&D and research policy. He co-edited two volumes, *Science Policy in International Perspective* (1989) and *A Dual World Economy: Forty Years of Development Experience* (1992).

In the early 1990s, George accepted the offer to become the Chief Scientist for Development Cooperation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in The Hague, a new position created by the then Minister of Development Cooperation, Jan Pronk. While continuing his association with Erasmus University, at the Ministry George took it as his task to bridge the world of academia and policy as well as between ‘the North’ and ‘the South’ by...
actively involving scientists, in particular from developing countries, in the design and implementation of development cooperation. An important reason for him to accept this position must have been the stimulating personality of the Minister for Development Cooperation himself, Jan Pronk, an old friend and colleague at the Division BIG and the Centre for Development Planning. In 1993, Waardenburg was elected Vice-Chairman of the United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development and in 1995 became its Chairman. Thanks to his intimate knowledge of the social and economic structure of India, he became actively involved in a collaboration project with the Indian Planning Commission, which aimed to develop new models to support policy formulation in the more liberal environment of the 1990s.

Ties with the Erasmus University were maintained throughout, and Waardenburg remained actively involved in some of the tasks of the Centre for Development Planning. For one thing, he continued his role as thesis supervisor of the Centre’s research associates, some of them coming from developing countries (for example, Weixin, 1992; Lal, 2000), some from The Netherlands (for example, Terhal, 1988; van Hoesel, 1999). Two of the latter should be mentioned here explicitly: Servaas Storm (1993) and Ro Naastepad (1999). Together with two other former PhD students, Hannah Piek and Roger van Hoesel, these two former students of his, took the laudable initiative to invite a number of George’s colleagues from all over the world to contribute to a Festschrift in his honour on the occasion of his retirement. The result of this endeavour is the present volume.

In his research and teaching, and as a policy-maker, George has always deliberately articulated the developing country perspective, rather than (as is common practice) reiterating the dominating views of donor governments and/or the international financial institutions. He has always regarded his own role as one of building bridges between (social science) researchers and policy-makers in the North and the South, keeping to Chakravarty’s dictum that ‘either we unite or we explode’. The papers in this volume testify to George’s important role in furthering North–South understanding.

Retirement? Yes! Dutch law is very strict regarding the retirement age of civil servants, and of those treated likewise such as academic staff. So, when George on 10 July 1999 reached the age of 65 he legally passed a threshold – marking both an end and a beginning. Experience teaches us that in academic life the crossing of the age line does not change one’s life overnight. The pressure on the daily schedule is only gradually reduced, and it takes some time before the backlog of unfinished jobs melts away. But then, new opportunities for fruitful activity arise, within one’s profession or in other
areas. Far from being a tragic event, retirement opens up a new phase in life with formerly unexpected possibilities. After a very busy life, filled to overflowing with all sorts of tasks and obligations to which he attended with utmost devotion and care, one wishes George Waardenburg wholeheartedly many gratifying years in good health in his new status of Professor Emeritus!

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